From: Marv Anderson
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 5:18pm
Subject: Microsoft Anti-trust case

Hello,

As a professional programmer for 35 years, and as a user of Microsoft software for the last 15 of those years, I feel that I have a fairly solid basis of experience on which to make my comments on this situation.

Microsoft is most certainly a monopoly, as has been determined by the courts. They are also most certainly predatory. In almost all of their markets, at least one competitor has superior products. In spite of this, Microsoft continues to dominate market after market.

There are several costs for this domination that are borne by all other parties in the software field. First, good products are obliterated by the juggernaut of Microsoft's domination of the OS market. By including their products in packages, they make it impossible for anyone else to compete with them.

Borland International had a magnificent product called Delphi, which was far and away the best programmer development tool available. Yet, they are a totally marginal tool today because Microsoft's Visual Basic had too strong a following in corporations, which is a critical market segment for these tools. This did not occur because VB was a better tool, but because it was easily available and tied in with all of the other Microsoft offerings.

A second cost is that fewer and fewer companies are willing to develop new products because if the product is technically successful, they will be attacked by Microsoft's bundling tactics before they gain enough market share to make the product a financial success. Netscape Communicator is a perfect example of this, and RealPlayer is likely to suffer the same fate.

Third, as Microsoft destroys competition, their products will inevitably become more and more inferior, while they can demand a higher price for them. The vast amounts of cash that they have accumulated would not have been possible if they had had to compete in any real sense.

I worked for twenty years in a mainframe world dominated by IBM, and all of these same problems existed then. But there are three critical differences. First, there were far fewer users of computers at that time. The public did not depend on them at all for its daily activities. Second, while IBM dominated the OS and hardware platforms, it did not have much presence in applications. Microsoft Office is a dominant application, and as such, most users are unable to avoid Microsoft in any aspect of their work lives.

The third, and most important difference, is that IBM was an honorable company that understood that they benefited by making their customers successful. While they certainly charged a lot for their services, they provided a very high level of service, and their software was extremely dependable.

Microsoft provides almost no services, and their software is riddled with bugs. XP is the first OS that does not crash often, and this is after 15 years of development. This is certainly not something that would be acceptable if there were real competition. Even more important, Microsoft exhibits an arrogance and lack of basic ethics on a regular basis.

Microsoft has clearly lied in court, lied to the American public, and ignored the previous court-defined remedies. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the very weak remedies agreed to by the Justice Department will be ignored by Microsoft. They don't even acknowledge that the did anything wrong, so it is absurd to think that they will change their practices because of a basically unenforceable agreement.

Even if they followed the guidelines, it is not likely to make much changes. The remedies do not address the essential issue of an excessively powerful organization with the means and intention of dominating the lives of as many people as they can.

I hate to think of the day when the United States government cannot function without Microsoft support for software upon which all departments will depend. I hate to think of an environment in which Microsoft controls the Internet the way they currently control desktop computing. At that point, there will be no way to stop them.

Thank You
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